

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1 to 53 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. In the present Amendment, claims 54 and 55 have been amended and new claims 59 to 76 have been added. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been introduced into the present application by any of the amendments or by the addition of the new claims. Reconsideration of the present application is requested in view of the following remarks.

Initially, the undersigned attorney would like to thank the Examiner for the personal interview on November 25, 2003. The interview was very helpful and applicants agree with the Examiner that the proposed amendments that were discussed at the interview (which have been incorporated in the present amendment) should overcome all of the rejections contained in the final Office Action and place this application into condition for allowance. As requested by the Examiner, applicants have reformatted the Amendment so that the proposed amendments to claims 36 to 50 are shown in new claims that come after the only independent claims left in this application (i.e., claims 54 and 55). Claims 51 to 53 (which were not amended in the proposed amendment) have also been canceled in favor of identical claims that have been included in the set of new claims.

The rejection of claims 34-58 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ruest et al. (US 4,524,077) in view of Grendel et al. (US 5,498,790) and Kawabe et al. (US 5,763,652), is respectfully traversed for the reasons set forth below.


As discussed at the interview, none of the cited references teaches or suggests the presently claimed method. The Ruest et al. patent teaches a method wherein the

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neutralized hydrolysate is not separated into an aqueous phase and an organic phase before the extraction step. In fact, as acknowledged by the Examiner in the interview, Ruest et al. teaches away from such a separation step before the extraction step (e.g., see column 6, lines 6-49). Further, the Ruest et al. patent does not teach the recovery of the ammonium salts. Instead, the ammonium salts are discarded as a waste product. It is respectfully submitted that these deficiencies in the teachings of the Ruest et al. patent cannot be found in the teachings of the secondary references. Accordingly, even if it was proper to combine the teachings of Ruest et al. with the teachings of the secondary references (which it is not), such a combination would not produce the invention of the present claims. In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present claims are not obvious in view of the cited references and are therefore in allowable condition.

Reconsideration of the present application and a favorable action concerning claims 54 to 76 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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